

hard right. He has enabled the Big Lie and has further eroded away at our precious democracy. When people don't believe elections are on the level, that is the beginning of the end of this bold experiment in democracy that has gone on for more than 200 years.

It is all the more shameful because Speaker MCCARTHY knows precisely what kind of customer Mr. Carlson is. He is not surprised by this outcome. What a low point for Speaker MCCARTHY. What a low point for FOX News.

As reporting on the Dominion lawsuit shows, Mr. Carlson had no problem admitting behind the scenes that the Big Lie is pure garbage. When Sydney Powell went on the air to push the stolen election narrative, Mr. Carlson told fellow anchor Laura Ingraham that "Sydney Powell is lying"—his words by the deposition. Mr. Carlson's own producer texted him that "I don't think there is evidence of voter fraud that swung the election."

They know. They know full well they have been lying, and they are doing it anyway. We all, Americans of all types and stripes and corners of this country—Democrats, Republicans, Independents—need to take a stand and call out Mr. Carlson's conduct for what it is: a dangerous, unforgivable attempt to destabilize our democracy and rewrite the history of the worst attack on our Constitution since the Civil War.

It is an insult to every police officer who was on the scene that terrible, fearful day. It is an insult to the memory of every single person who perished in connection with the attack, especially to the memory of Brian Sicknick.

Nonviolent? Ask the Sicknick family. It makes me sick just thinking about what his family must be going through this morning.

And it is an insult to everyone who cares about our democracy and wishes to preserve the dream of our Founders in our day, in our age. I hope every Member of this Chamber will call out FOX and Mr. Carlson for defending the insurrectionists.

And, again, I am disappointed and angered in Speaker MCCARTHY's decision to share sensitive security footage with Mr. Carlson. Speaker MCCARTHY was here that day. He knows what actually happened. His staff and members suffered like everyone else, but he chose cheap political expediency over truth and preservation of democracy.

I condemn Mr. Carlson for siding with the enemies of democracy. I strongly condemn Speaker MCCARTHY's actions and fiercely oppose his decision to share this footage with Carlson. I urge FOX News to order Carlson to cease propagating the Big Lie on his network and to level with their viewers about the truth—the truth—behind the efforts to mislead the public. Conduct like theirs is just asking for another January 6 to happen.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. President, on another subject, as East Palestine continues grappling

with the aftermath of last month's derailment and after a second derailment in Ohio last weekend, Norfolk Southern announced yesterday a new six-point plan they claim will "immediately enhance the safety of its operations."

But here is the question all of us should be asking: Why weren't these protocols already in place?

When Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw comes before the Senate on Thursday, this is just one of the important questions he must answer. Here are a few others: What steps is Norfolk Southern taking to prevent future disasters like the one in East Palestine? Why did Norfolk Southern spend years lobbying against safety regulations intended to prevent accidents like the one last month? How will Norfolk Southern ensure communities along train routes with hazardous materials get the resources they need to respond to accidents—the resources and the information they need? Why did Norfolk Southern launch a \$10 billion stock buyback program last year when that money could have gone to upgrading safety equipment, hiring more workers, or paying their workers better wages?

We need answers to these questions. We need an honest, candid discussion how we can prevent accidents like this in the future. Part of that discussion must acknowledge the plain truth: Republicans have spent years listening to the rail lobby and opposing safety rules in the name of boosting rail company profits. I am talking about the Trump administration loosening brake maintenance and inspection regulations, attempting to deregulate freight train crew size, and nullifying a rule that implemented safety programs. I am talking about Republicans in this Chamber pushing for the "self-regulation" of railroads and leaving safety up to the whims of the free market, to allow for the transportation of more hazardous materials without proper oversight, and to encourage the automation of track inspection at the expense of safety. All of these create dangers.

We don't know yet all the details of what exactly happened in East Palestine, but we know these deregulatory actions make things less safe.

I hope that we can work together, Democrats and Republicans, to put a much-needed, long-overdue check on big rail and make sure another East Palestine never happens. And I commend the bipartisan legislation led by the Senators from Ohio—Senator BROWN, a Democrat and Senator VANCE, a Republican—to move things forward.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, the budget. For the last 2 months, Democrats have highlighted the contrast between our vision and the Republican vision for our country. Republicans, meanwhile, have spent all this time trying to prove us right.

In a few days, President Biden will release his budget for the 2024 fiscal

year. Americans can expect the President to present a bold, optimistic, and responsible path for the Nation. The President's plan is going to show how we can lower the deficit in a responsible manner. His plan will strengthen Social Security and keep Medicare solvent for another 2 decades. And the President's plan will preserve his promise not to raise taxes on anyone making less than \$400,000 a year.

This isn't just talk because Democrats have already shown we can do these things. We already lowered the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars. We already lowered the cost of prescription drugs, like insulin, and we hope to build on that promise in the near future. And the President explained this morning in an op-ed in the New York Times that he plans to build on the progress we made last year in the Inflation Reduction Act by making Medicare solvent through the year 2050. Isn't that great news for the American people, even younger people who will need it before 2050?

He will expand the list of drugs Medicare can renegotiate. He will take profits that used to go to Big Pharma and put it toward deficit reduction. Many Americans think it would be just a great idea to take the money that normally goes to Big Pharma and put it towards deficit reduction and towards keeping Medicare solvent longer. This commonsense step will help millions of ordinary Americans.

Republicans, to their credit, are being very helpful about erasing any doubt about which party is fighting for the working people and the middle class. While Democrats are for keeping taxes low for most Americans, Republicans tried to push a national sales tax that would have sent taxes surging by 30 percent for millions. While Democrats want to make the wealthy pay their fair share, House Republicans passed their first bill, a proposal to carve out the IRS and make it easier for wealthy tax cheats to avoid detection.

While Democrats will protect Social Security, Republicans, like the senior Senator from Wisconsin, decided to go on the radio the day after the State of the Union and call Social Security a "Ponzi scheme." Can you imagine?

If my Republican colleagues have a problem with what I am saying, there is an easy solution. Speaker MCCARTHY needs to stop dodging and show us the Republican plan. It is now March 7. Two months have passed already in this year. The debt ceiling X date is approaching. Republicans have said they will release a plan. They say they want spending cuts in return for just paying our debts which we already incurred. Where is their plan? What is the hold-up?

The President will release his budget very soon, and the onus is on Speaker MCCARTHY to respond with a serious plan of his own that is a budget plan

that deals with deficit reduction, because we think that should occur without hostage-taking, without any brinkmanship, as it has been done three times in the past few years.

So, Speaker MCCARTHY, respond with a plan, one that can unite the fractured and chaotic factions of the Republican Congress.

NOMINATION OF ARUN SUBRAMANIAN

Mr. President, I will have more to say on this later, but I am just very proud the Senate will vote to confirm a highly qualified judicial nominee whom I recommended, Arun Subramanian.

If confirmed, he will be the first South Asian judge in the Southern District of New York, which has one of the largest—if not the largest—South Asian population in the country. He is a great judge. I am looking forward to him serving well on the bench. I will have more to say about him before his vote this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

CRIME

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 1 month ago, the Biden administration published an official statement opposing Republicans' bill to block a disastrous new soft-on-crime law right here in our Nation's Capital. The administration was on the record against it.

Then the overwhelming majority of House Democrats voted against our commonsense resolution when it passed the House. The proposition behind our bill is simple. It goes like this: The answer to skyrocketing violent crime in the District of Columbia is not—not—to reduce criminal penalties even further. On what planet should this even need to be said in the first place?

The murder rate in Washington is 34 percent higher today than it was at this time last year. Auto thefts are up 110 percent right here in the Nation's Capital. Longtime DC residents are locking their car doors at every red light. Tourists visiting their own capital are worried about walking the streets.

Just yesterday, the chief of the Metropolitan Police lamented that the average homicide suspect that his department encounters has already been arrested—listen to this—11 times before, 11 times.

Here is what the police chief said:

What we've got to do—if we really want to see homicides go down—is keep bad guys with guns in jail. Because when they're in

jail, they can't be in communities shooting people.

That is the police chief here in the Nation's Capital.

But the radical politicians who run the city tried to do exactly the opposite. The liberal city council cooked up a soft-on-crime overhaul of the Criminal Code that would have made it even easier for repeat offenders to get back out on the streets. It would have brought the mandatory minimum sentences for crimes like robbery and carjacking down even lower than they already are. And it would have gummed up an already backlogged and dysfunctional criminal justice system by massively expanding jury trials—listen to this—for misdemeanors. It is like these local Democrats have never met a single criminal they actually want locked up behind bars. It is truly remarkable.

This is exactly why our laws give Congress the final say—the final say—over how our Nation's Capital is governed because we can't have the craziness and dysfunction of a few local politicians jeopardizing the basic public safety in the Federal district that houses our national government. So Republicans wrote a resolution to overturn this nonsense.

But bear in mind, this limited resolution would not even toughen criminal penalties. At this point, we are talking about keeping things where they are and stopping even further—even further—backsliding.

The first step is to use this legal tool to stop the unhinged local politicians from making the totally unacceptable status quo even worse. But even so, this is a bridge too far for the vast majority of Washington Democrats.

Just a month ago, the White House issued an official statement opposing House Republicans' commonsense resolution saying:

Congress should respect the District of Columbia's [authority] to govern its own local affairs.

And listen to this: 82 percent of House Democrats fell in line behind the Biden administration and voted no. But then something amazing happened.

I think somebody at the White House may have shown the President his latest poll numbers on this issue—fewer than one in three Americans approve of the way he is handling crime—because Washington Democrats started panicking and reversed themselves on a dime. The President came here last week, pulled a 180, and told our Democratic colleagues he won't veto the resolution after all.

Now there appears to be a different kind of jailbreak brewing right here in the Senate, and a number of Democrats may jump ship at the eleventh hour, trying to act like they have been tough on crime all along. But our colleagues will not be getting off the hook that easily.

It is not an act of heroic political courage for Democrats to help Congress do our basic minimum job and

stop the DC Council from making an unacceptable status quo even worse, and none of our colleagues get to erase their entire records with this one vote.

Remember, just last summer, every single Senate Democrat went on record against a proposal to redirect a portion of their massive taxing-and-spending spree to fight surging crime.

Let the record reflect what actually gets Washington Democrats' attention and what does not. It did not get their attention when rates of violent crime in America's major cities were accelerating this time last year. It did not get their attention that compared to prepandemic levels, homicide nationwide are up 34 percent. It hadn't gotten Democrats' attention when the streets of our own Federal district are where repeated offenders are driving spikes in carjackings and murder.

But now that even the mainstream media are beginning to hold them to account for their negligence, now Washington Democrats are finally trying to change their tune. Innocent citizens getting shot in our streets didn't do it, but when Democrats take political shots in the press, that finally gets their attention.

So, look, we will welcome any of our Democratic colleagues who can recognize basic sanity and want to be on the winning side for our Republican resolution later this week, but local, State, and national Democratic Party officials will not be getting off the hot seat as quickly or as easily as they have got convicted felons getting back on the streets.

Washington, DC is only 0.2 percent of our Nation's population. What about New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, Philadelphia, even Louisville? Don't these citizens deserve some sanity as well? Don't the families and children and elderly people and young women of these communities deserve to walk their streets with safety and security too?

We cannot only have public safety in this country in exceptional cases when a Republican House and a narrowly divided Senate can force Democrats to do the right thing against their will.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MAGNITSKY SANCTIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, the Biden administration announced it was imposing Magnitsky law-related sanctions on several Putin thugs involved in the jailing of Vladimir Kara-Murza. This is the move that I, along with Senators SHAHEEN, RUBIO, TILLIS, MENENDEZ, and RISCH, had urged.

Kara-Murza is an incredible Russian patriot who, despite being poisoned